

Dialect prestige in contemporary Lithuania

A pilot study

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“It is to say that most people feel more comfortable when speaking a dialect. So we should let the speak [...]”

Meilutė Ramonienė 2012

Overview

- > Theoretical background
 - > Introduction
 - > The study
 - > Results & Conclusion
 - > Limitations and chances of the study
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Theoretical background

- > Perceptual dialectology
 - It's about people's lay linguistic impression of certain dialect groups and their language areas

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 - Methods:
 - Draw-a-map



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 - Methods:
 - Draw-a-map
 - Questionnaires and many more...



Dialect use in Lithuania

How old are you?

.....

To what ethnicity do you belong to?

- ☐ Lithuanian
- ☐ Polish
- ☐ Russian
- ☐ Belorussian
- ☐ Other
- ☐ I don't know

Where did grow up (name of city or village)?

.....

What's your fathers' ethnicity?

- ☐ Lithuanian
- ☐ Polish
- ☐ Russian
- ☐ Belorussian
- ☐ Other
- ☐ I don't know

What's your mothers' ethnicity?

- ☐ Lithuanian
- ☐ Polish
- ☐ Russian
- ☐ Belorussian
- ☐ Other
- ☐ I don't know

Which is your mother tongue?

- ☐ Lithuanian

other:

Introduction



- > Traditional dialects in Lithuania
- Two main dialects:
 - Aukštaitian dialects
 - Žemaitian dialects

Introduction



> Traditional dialects in Lithuania

— Two main dialects:

- Aukštaitian dialects
 - Differ amongst other things in realisation of nasal vowels and nasal diphthongs
- Žemaitian dialects
 - Differ amongst other things in realisation of the diphthong *uo*

The study

- > The aim of the study was:
 - ...to document the status of dialects within Lithuanian society
 - ...to discuss dialect in Lithuania as an identity marker
 - ...to observe the preservation of traditional dialects in Lithuania as cultural heritage
-

The study

> Method:

— Questionnaire

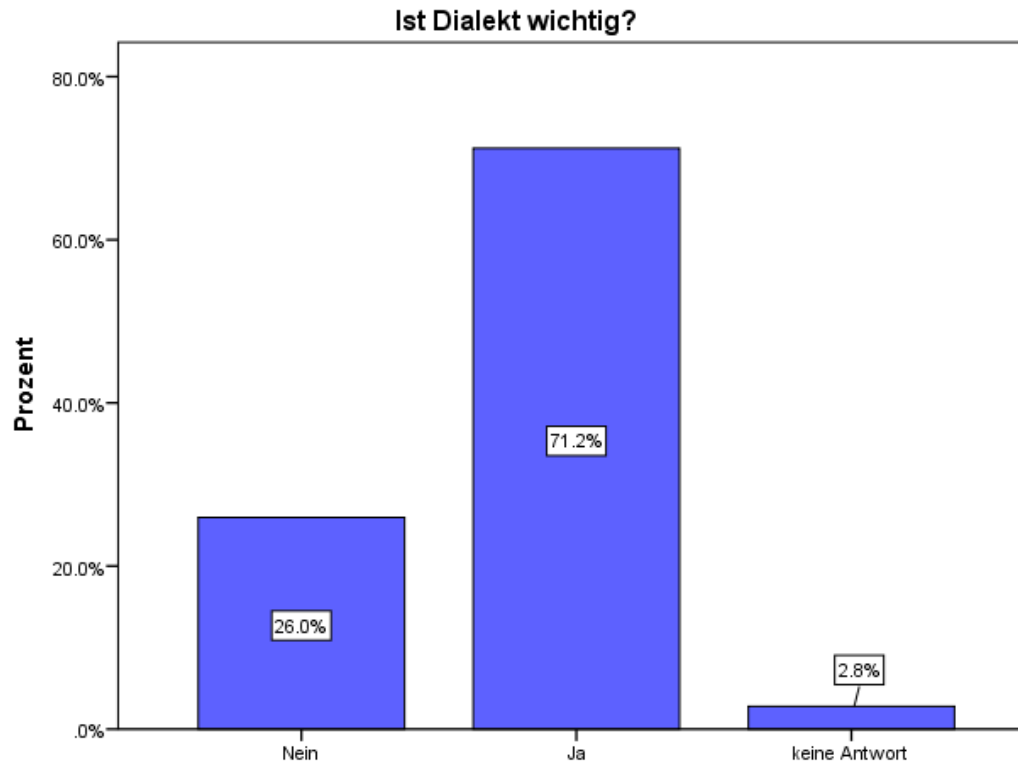
- 40 questions
 - In English, answers in Lithuanian, Russian, English, German, French, Italian and Spanish possible
 - Distributed to 302 students of Vilnius University in Feb. 2012
 - 285 valid questionnaires analysed
-

Results

- > Preliminaries:
 - Age: 18-36
 - 90,5% Lithuanians, 8,5% Slavic origin, 1% others
 - Informants geographically equally distributed in whole Lithuania
 - Mother tongue:
 - 90% Lithuanian
 - 9% Slavic language
 - 1% other language
 - 52,6% indicate to speak a Lithuanian dialect, 80% of dialect speakers can name their dialect
-

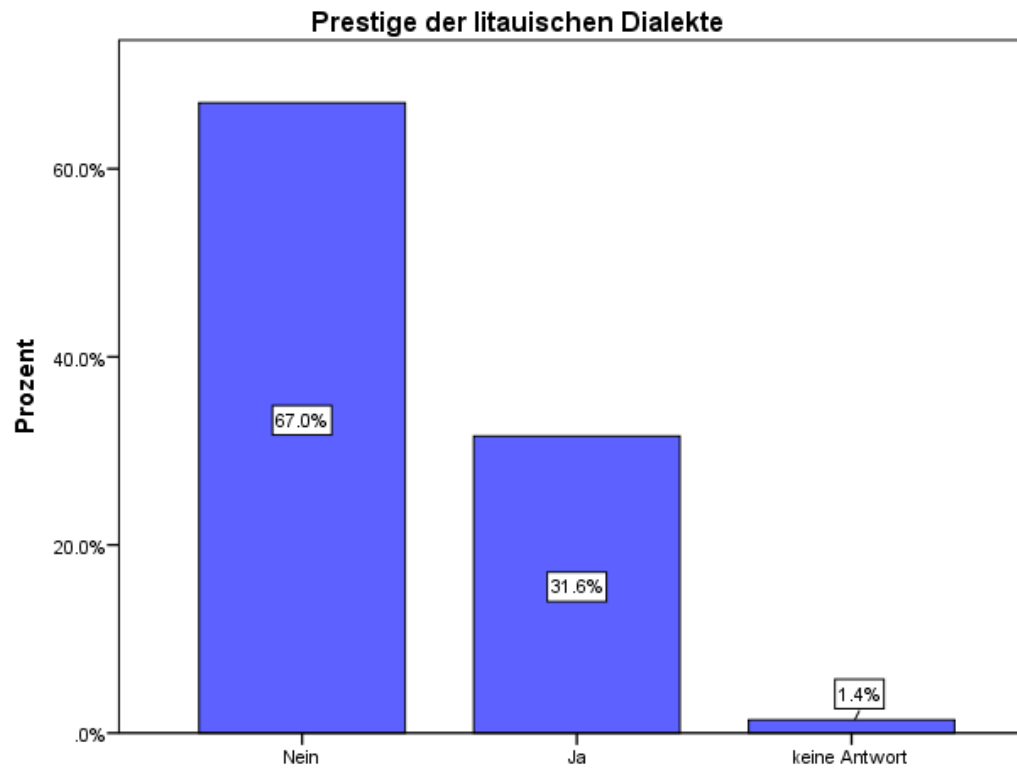
Results

> Do you think it is important to speak a dialect?



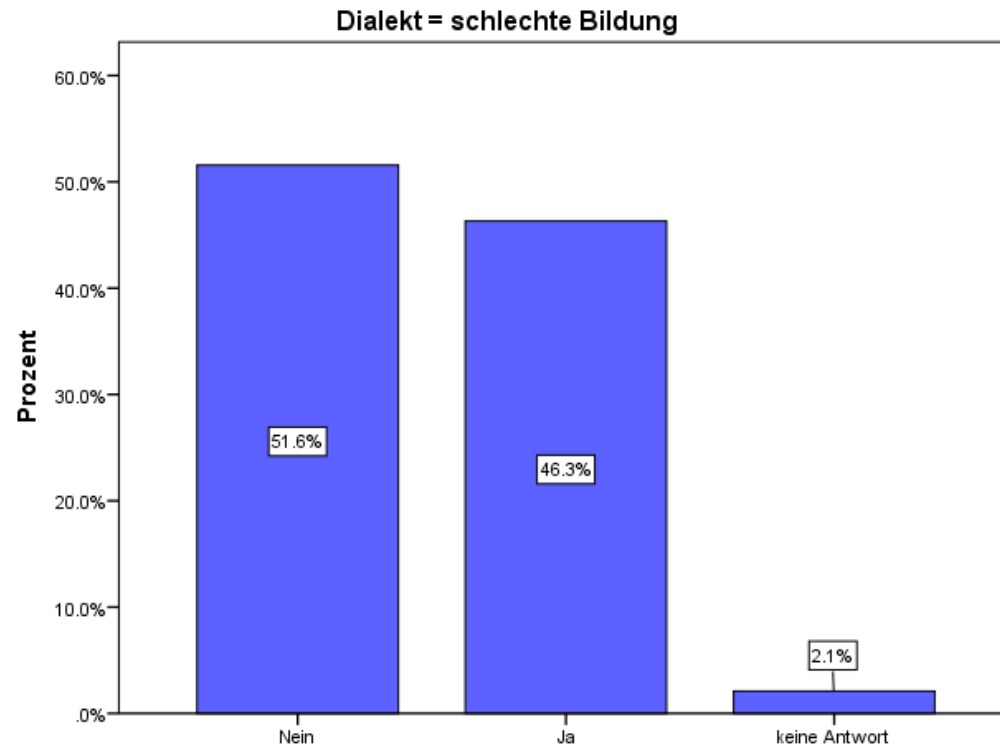
Results

- > Do you think Lithuanian dialects have a high prestige?



Results

- > Do you think someone is uneducated when he speaks a dialect?

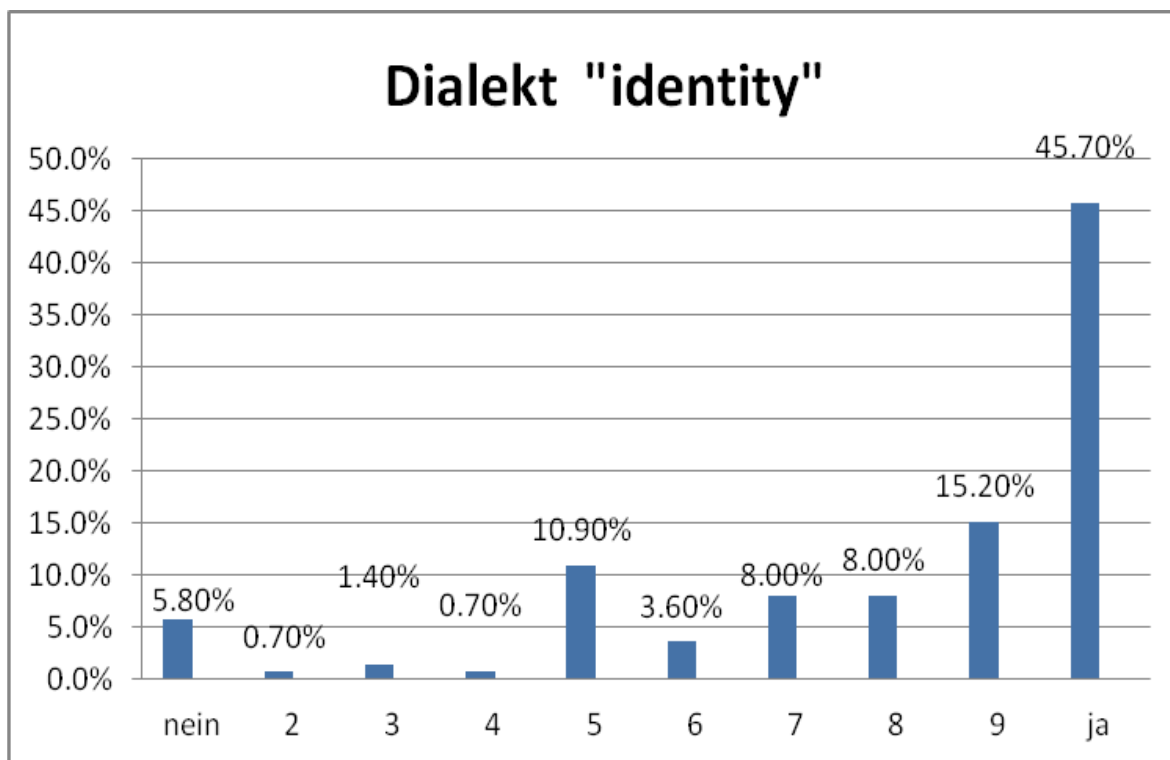


Conclusion

- > Dialect status
 - 10 questions concerning dialect status asked
 - It seems that Lithuanian dialects are considered to have a rather low prestige
 - There is a tendency to consider dialect speaker as less educated
 - But: It is very important for Lithuanians that dialects are still spoken.
-

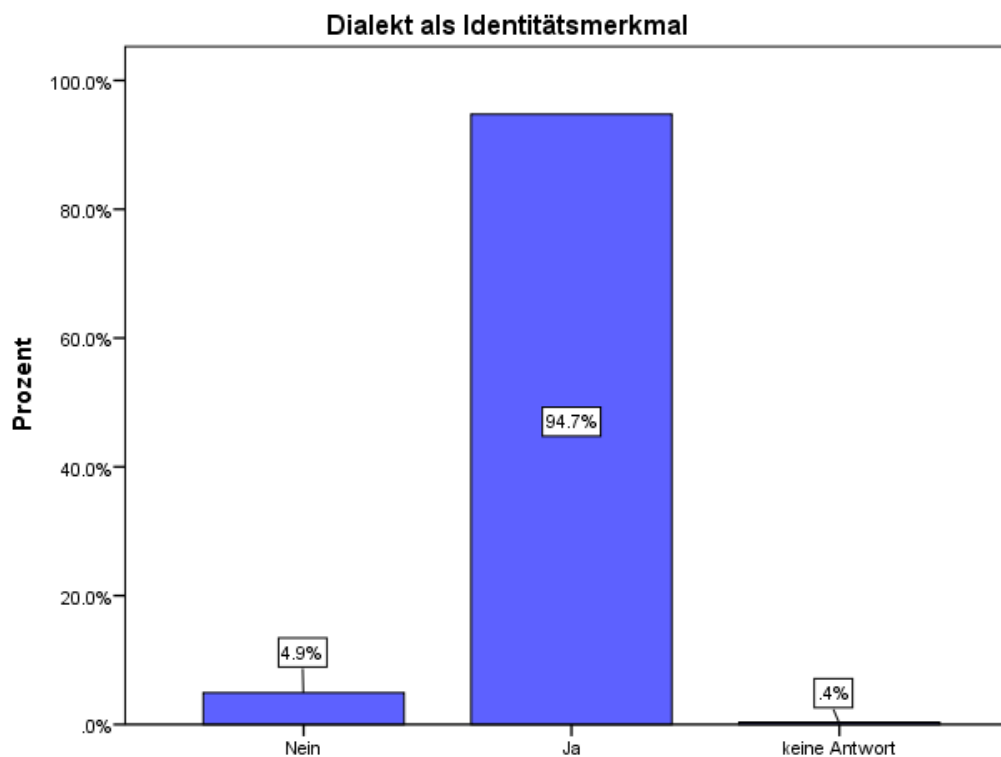
Results

> Is your dialect a part of your identity? (n=138)



Results

- > Do you think dialects are important for the national identity of Lithuanians?

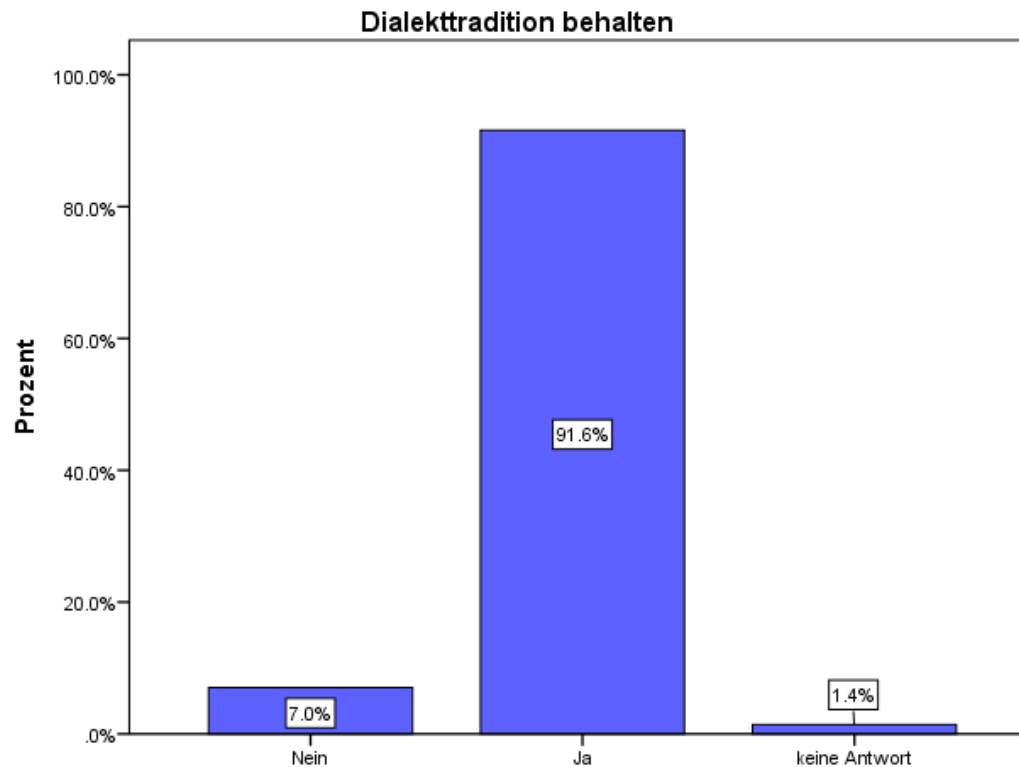


Conclusion

- > Dialect as an identity marker
 - 5 questions concerning dialect and identity asked
 - Dialects are considered to be an important part of the Lithuanian identity
 - For dialect speakers
 - But also for Lithuanians not speaking a dialect
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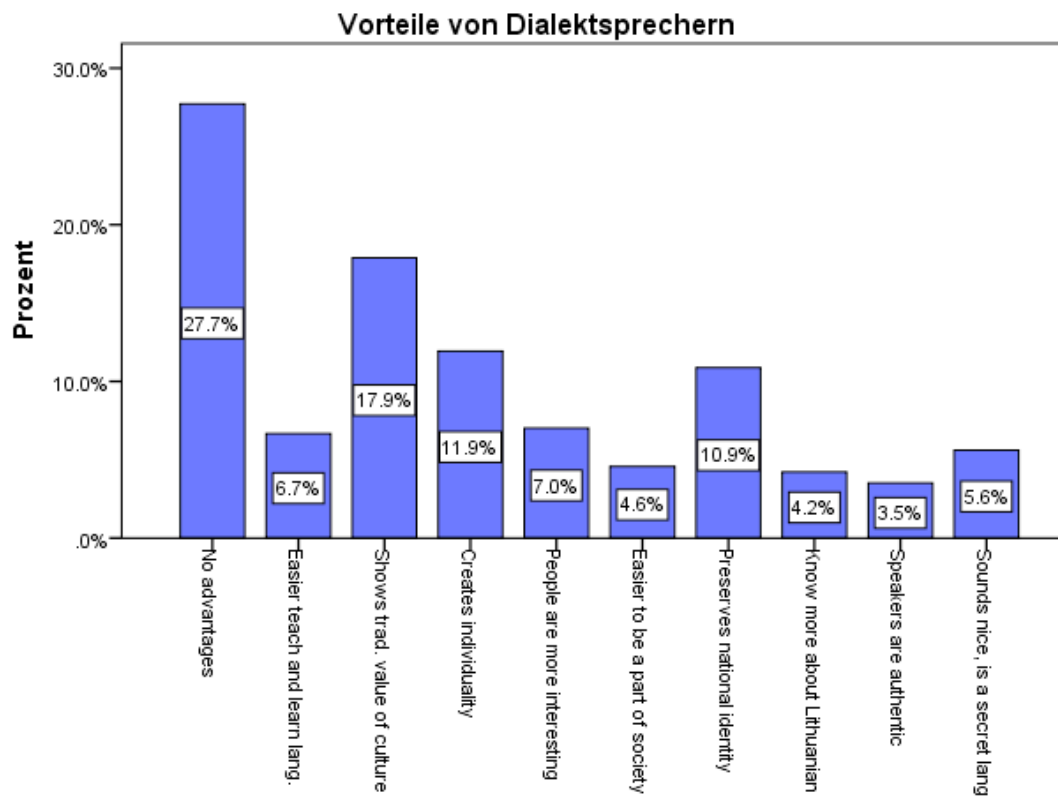
Results

- > Do you think it is important to keep the dialect tradition in Lithuania?



Results

> What are the advantages of dialect speakers?



Conclusion

- > Dialects as cultural heritage
 - 4 questions about dialect and cultural heritage asked
 - Tendency that dialects are understood more as cultural heritage than as daily language
 - Better chance of preservation in case of loss of traditional dialects?
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Limitations and chances of the study

- > Only a master's thesis, applied method and analysis is to be improved, superficial in some part!
 - > Rather small pilot study including only one age group at only one place in Lithuania
 - > But:
 - Shows the sociolinguistic research potential within the Lithuanian dialect area
 - Indicates the value of future perceptual dialectological studies in Lithuania
 - Demonstrates tendencies of change in the Lithuanian dialect area, especially concerning dialect use and dialect preservation
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*Thank you
for your
attention!*